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Wendy Mallette
Valparaiso University

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Not Afraid of Lacking: Toward an Asexual Theology

Wendy Mallette

Departmental Affiliation: Theology
College of Arts and Sciences

This paper details an asexual theological response to two problems that queer theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid challenges: dyadic thinking and the systematic desexualization of bodies within theological discourses as these uphold the omnipotency of God the Father. Drawing from Althaus-Reid's discussion of critical bisexuality to address the first problem, this paper discusses how asexuality challenges the oneness logic of heterosexual dyads and demonstrates how asexuality can destabilize the sexual/asexual dichotomy. Using Luce Irigaray's understanding of dyads, this paper responds to Althaus-Reid's critique of the asexualization of poor women in liberation theology. It problematizes the desexualization of certain bodies – the bodies of poor people, people with disabilities, lesbians, women, and fat people – not only because such discourses objectify these bodies but also because these desexualizations, instead of representing asexual persons, become the site of their erasure. Lastly, this development towards an asexual theology centers on what Althaus-Reid, following Helene Cixous, calls “not being afraid of lacking, that is, doing theology while trying to distance ourselves from a Christian phallocratic symbolic order.” Therefore, this paper argues that these two notions – dyadic thought and the desexualization of bodies – support a constitutive element of the Christian phallocratic economy that relies on a sexual/asexual dichotomy where to be sexual is to be something and to be asexual – or a desexualized body – is to be nothing. This paper develops an asexual theology as not-afraid-of-lacking which takes a critical relation of lacking to God the Father's phallic omnipotency.

Information about the Author:

Wendy Mallette is a senior international service major, particularly interested in the fields of queer, feminist, and liberation theologies. This paper is a continuation of project begun after reading queer theologian, Marcella Althaus-Reid, for a course on 20th Century Theology and is part of her thesis for a course on Liberation Theology. Next year, Wendy will be interning at the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual in Washington, D.C.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Garry Sparks

Student Contact: wendy.mallette@valpo.edu